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General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

81st plenary meeting
Friday, 24 April 2009, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain), Vice President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its consideration of agenda item 65 and its sub-items (a) to (c) at its 68th plenary meeting, on 11 December 2008. As indicated in the footnote to document A/63/L.67*, in order to enable the Assembly to consider the draft resolution, it is necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 65.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 65?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed immediately to consideration of sub-item (b) of item 65? I see no objections, so we shall proceed accordingly.

Agenda item 65 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance:

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/659)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.67*)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Kazakhstan to introduce draft resolution A/63/L.67*.

Ms. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): Today is Friday, but so many members of the Assembly are here. They are most welcome, and from the bottom of my heart I would like to wish all a pleasant weekend after they have taken action on this draft resolution, which I hope will be adopted today.

I am honoured to present draft resolution A/63/L.67*, entitled "International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan", which has been submitted under agenda item 65 (b).

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09-31258 (E)

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This is the sixth time such a draft resolution is to be adopted. In this regard we express our deep appreciation to Member States that have previously supported these resolutions and those that are sponsoring the draft resolution on the Semipalatinsk region for the first time. Today 88 Member States have already co-sponsored the draft resolution. My delegation deems this support to be recognition of the historical contribution of Kazakhstan to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, in 1991, for the first time in world history, the largest nuclear test site in the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan was shut down by decree of the President of our country, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev.

It is known that from 1949 to 1989 there were 458 atmospheric and underground nuclear and thermonuclear explosions, the cumulative capacity of which equalled 2,500 bombs of the size dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. The area affected by that nuclear testing is more than 300,000 square kilometres, and the consequences are tragic. More than a million people have been recognized as victims of this inhuman exercise. Radiation has weakened people's immune systems. Disease rates have subsequently risen, and the cost and duration of diseases have been exacerbated. The harmful impact of nuclear testing is transmitted from generation to generation.

It is worth noting that the problem of Semipalatinsk is not entirely new to the international community. Kazakhstan has struggled with the consequences of the nuclear tragedy for almost two decades, and it calls on the international community to intensify efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament and prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Kazakhstan has real reason to argue vociferously about the need for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, since for 40 years our land has been a testing ground for deadly weapons and our people are today experiencing the dire consequences of those tests.

The draft of the sixth resolution on the Semipalatinsk region is clear evidence of the recognition by the international community that this issue remains a matter of serious concern for the people and Government of Kazakhstan with regard to the long-term nature and adverse effects on the life and health of people, especially children, and on the environment of the region.

The draft resolution notes the important role of the Government of Kazakhstan in allocating the domestic resources for rehabilitation of the region in the context of relevant national programmes, including that entitled "Complex solution of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site problems for 2005-2007" and the elaboration of a new programme cycle for 2009 to 2011.

In addition, the draft resolution recognizes the contributions of various United Nations agencies, donor countries and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in providing humanitarian aid and projects for the rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region.

In particular, I wish to express deep gratitude to the Government of Japan for its substantial financial support for a number of projects implemented by the United Nations Development Programme in Kazakhstan aimed at improving the living standards in the region. Moreover, Japan has assisted the local government in implementing a major project to improve the health care system in the region. In addition, the Unites States Agency for International Development is implementing a project in the field of primary health care. The United Kingdom is rendering assistance in the development of a plan for collective land use in secure areas of the Semipalatinsk test site. The European Commission is funding a project in the field of nuclear safety. Also, there have been a number of other projects with financial support from the Governments of our neighbouring countries and of Switzerland, Italy and Canada, among others.

The draft resolution also invites Member States to observe, in 2011, the twentieth anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and welcomes initiatives commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the international anti-nuclear movement "Nevada-Semei", and the international conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency on remediation of land contaminated by radioactive material resides, to be held in 2009.

The novelty of this draft resolution is that the results of its implementation will be reviewed at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly under the agenda item "Sustainable development", whereas all previous resolutions were considered under the item on humanitarian aid to countries with special needs. The reduced relevance of the humanitarian component in

the draft resolution is related to the increase in domestic resources for regional socio-economic programmes in the context of overall development, while international assistance in the form of relevant technical expertise aimed at overcoming the effects of nuclear explosions comes to the fore. In fact, the cooperation between the international community and the Government of Kazakhstan to overcome the effects of nuclear explosions is reaching a new level.

It should be also stressed that the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/659) noted the need to provide advanced technologies to minimize and mitigate radiological, socio-economic, environmental and health problems in the Semipalatinsk region. The draft resolution calls upon the international community to support Kazakhstan in the development and implementation of special programmes and projects to address the situation in our efforts to achieve economic growth and sustainable development in the Semipalatinsk region.

In conclusion, I would like to note that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus, without a vote. I thank the Assembly for its kind support.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/63/L.67*, entitled "International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Australia, Austria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Colombia, Croatia, Djibouti, France, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Israel, Mauritius, Monaco, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic and Thailand.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.67*?

Draft resolution A/63/L.67 was adopted* (resolution 63/279).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 65.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.